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Bonfire's Gordon Rudow: Nurturing 'Networks of Conversations'

By Eckhart Beatty SF/IABC's April 13 presenter Gordon Rudo CEO of San Francisco-based Bonfire Communications, offere attendees fresh insights into th process of strategic planning within the corporate communications environment. organizational consultant focus on strategic communications, Rudow developed his expertise orchestrating initiatives with diverse teams over the past 13 years.

Bonfire's clients are leading companies in their respective industries and include Genente Oracle, Symantec and Starbuck

In Rudow's view, to work with a client on organizational evoluti it is first necessary to "nurture conversations," which can insp

people to take appropriate acti
Unveiling his firm’s “Accelerate
Communications Planning Map,
Rudow demonstrated a
comprehensive set of tools
consisting of interwoven
iconography—including intricat
nested hierarchies—
demonstrating complex proces
as well as workflows. Taking a
holistic view, an industrial
“ecosystem” of sorts emerges.
Feedback loops such as those
found in a natural ecosystem
become apparent.

"Organizations represent netwo
of conversations guiding indivi
actions,” says Rudow. Seen fro
this perspective, the corporate
culture itself can be viewed as
“collective conversation.” To gu
a culture through change, a
communications professional
needs to “nurture such
conversations”—inspiring team
members to take action “in
alignment with some favored n
direction.” Bonfire manages
various dichotomies within the
enterprise, such as those found
between sales and marketing.
Initially one needs to discover t
unique needs of the client’s

specific audiences, and what actually motivates each of ther to learn how communication strategy can achieve operation change at each tier within the organization. Profiling concerns within the enterprise is absolut key to aligning them toward desired objectives.

Getting folks to “behave differently” can be accomplishe by identifying some overarchin “north star” theme to drive tha organization’s communications Tools are selected based on ho people learn and what inspires them to take action. When the right stakeholders are involved the accelerated planning sessio one can come away with an act plan to guide the creative team it refines the message, design a tools from within the dialogue. Finally, the plan is rolled out in conjunction with events that of it traction. Appropriate messag at each tier of the enterprise ca lead to operational effectivenes Messages are guided by what Rudow referred to as “northsta ideas.” Every story serves as a “proofpoint” that supports the

central guiding idea.

Rudow readily acknowledges th
although consulting organizatio
such as his can guide and direc
effective alignment through
strategy, one can't just "shift" a
organization's culture. They can
however, guide it in taking an
effective new direction and mo
the behavior of internal
stakeholders.

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*For another viewpoint, check o
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